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ABSTRACT

This article is based upon the author's survey of journalism instruction in junior colleges. A questionnaire was sent to 1073 junior colleges, and 936 (87.2 percent) responded to the survey. Of that number, 553 (59 percent) indicated that they have one or more academic courses in journalism. The courses most taught in junior colleges were: (1) survey of mass communication, taught by 312 schools, the majority of which indicated that the publication of the school newspaper was an adjunct to the course; (2) reporting, news-writing, or journalistic writing, taught in 281 schools; (3) editing or editing and layout, taught in 137 schools; (4) reporting II, taught in 101 schools; (5) photojournalism, taught in 69 schools; and (6) advertising, taught in 30 schools. The author concluded from this survey that most junior colleges have at least described a commendable journalism curriculum, and it seemed apparent that the potential for junior college instruction in the first two years of a journalism degree program is promising. (WR)

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CURRICULUM DEFINITION IN JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNALISM

Dr. Frank Deaver

The burden for initial college journalism instruction is increasingly falling upon the two-year colleges. At the forefront of growth in higher education is a faster-than-average rate of increase in two particular areas: (1) students enrolled in journalism; and (2) students enrolled in junior colleges.

The inevitable result of these parallel circumstances is a rapidly emerging necessity for defining an area of journalism instruction appropriate to the two-year schools.

State and regional evaluation of junior college journalism instruction has been attempted in several instances in the past few years, but attempts at national study have been typically limited to low-percentage response. This article is based upon the author's recent national survey which was near total in coverage. Careful evaluation of that survey's findings reveals patterns of journalism curricula as they exist in the nation's junior colleges.

Of the 1073 junior colleges in the nation, 936 (87.2%) responded to the survey. Of that number, 553 (59%) indicated that they teach journalism as one or more academic courses. Of those 553 schools, responses from 401 were sufficiently complete from which to tabulate the information that is the basis for this article.

Course offerings in journalism are defined and described in a seemingly endless variety of ways. Both course titles and descriptions are sufficiently broad that nothing journalistic is necessarily excluded. Definite knowledge of class content cannot be ascertained from the current study any more accurately than it can be from most catalog descriptions.

The courses most commonly taught in junior colleges were tabulated by name, and questionnaire responses were fitted to those named courses as accurately as possible. From elaborations offered by some respondents, however, it is clear that course titles are by no means definitive or exclusive. In spite of these shortcomings, it is apparent that in the 401 schools providing complete responses the following described courses were most commonly taught:

1. Survey of (or Introduction to) Mass Communication (or Journalism, or Mass Media). Taught by 312 schools. Some treat this course as a nonwriting introductory course, while others describe it as including some newswriting. The vast majority indicate that publication of the school newspaper is an adjunct of this course.

2. Reporting I (or News-Writing, or Journalistic Writing). Taught in 281 schools. For the purpose of this tabulation, this course is distinguished from the previous in that it is specified to be primarily reporting and writing, rather than familiarization with the media. Again, the vast majority indicate that students in this course will be expected to participate in publication of the school newspaper.

3. Editing (or Editing I, or Editing and Layout). Taught in 137 schools. Often described as also including additional reporting.

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4. Reporting II (or other description indicating a second course in news-writing). Taught in 101 schools.

5. Photojournalism (or Photography, or News Photography). Taught in 69 schools.

6. Advertising (or Survey of Advertising, or Introduction to Advertising). Taught in 30 schools

MOST COMMONLY TAUGHT JOURNALISM COURSES

IN 401 JUNIOR COLLEGES

Course Description	No.	%
Introduction or Survey	312	78%
News-writing or Reporting I	281	70%
Editing	137	34%
Reporting II	101	25%
Photojournalism	69	17%
Advertising	30	7%

In addition, a number of schools indicated that they offer one or two credits per semester (usually repeatable) for publications production or practicum. Courses so identified were usually defined as non-transferable credit, and they were not included in the above tabulation of the most frequently offered courses of instruction.

Although the above six courses were the most frequently mentioned, it was most common for a school to teach four courses or less. Of the 401 schools included in this analysis 297 (75%) report that they teach not more than four courses. Another 86 schools list 5 or 6 courses, for a combined total of 383 (95%) that teach not more than six courses.

In the immediately previous listings of numbers of courses, a production course or practicum is often included, although it is not listed earlier as one of the courses most frequently offered.

This means that only 18 junior colleges (less than 5%) list catalog entries of more than 6 journalism courses. Listings become as extensive as 21 courses offered by a single junior college.

It might be suspected that those schools offering the larger number of courses are schools with "terminal" curricula in journalism. This is not necessarily the case, however, although many do indicate that something less than their maximum offering is transferable. Those two schools offering 20 and 21 courses in journalism respectively indicate that a student may transfer to regional universities

[illegible] cases, it was indicated that the large offering of journalism was a conscious effort in that state to provide specialized education in journalism in a single two-year school.

In most cases, however, where 2 or more courses of journalism were offered in a school, it was indicated that something less than the full course offering might be transferred to regional universities toward a degree program in journalism.

Four states clearly emerged as leaders in junior college journalism instruction. In each of these cases, complete responses were received from 20 or more junior colleges offering journalism, and there is enough apparent uniformity in characteristics of curricula to suggest the probability of some unified planning within the state.

Of the 81 California junior colleges responding with complete data, the average number of courses offered in each school was 4.4 and the average number of courses deemed transferable was 4.0.

Of the 36 Texas junior colleges responding with complete data, the average number of courses offered in each school was 3.7 and the average number of courses deemed transferable was 3.6.

Of the 29 Illinois junior colleges responding with complete data, the average number of courses offered in each school was 3.0 and the average number of courses deemed transferable was 2.7.

Of the 22 Florida junior colleges responding with complete data, the average number of courses offered in each school was 2.9 and the average number of courses deemed transferable was.2.7.

JOURNALISM COURSES OFFERED AND TRANSFERABILITY

IN JUNIOR COLLEGES IN FOUR SELECTED STATES

State (and JC's responding)		Average Courses	Avg. for Transfer
California	81	4.4	4.0
Texas	36	3.7	3.6
Illinois	29	3.0	2.7
Florida	22	2.9	2.7

In several states, as well as at the national level, some attempts have been made on several occasions to define an ideal curriculum in journalism appropriate to the first two years of collegiate study. Most recently, the Junior College Journalism Association, in conjunction with the Association for Education in Journalism, established guidelines intended to "strengthen community college journalism programs and provide a goal which may be conveyed to junior college

administrators and which may be used by journalism teachers in their planning." The guidelines proposed that up to 12 units (4 courses) might be taught by the junior colleges and that those 4 courses should be chosen from a list of 6 courses which, it turns out, are the same 6 that were found by this author's research to be the most commonly offered.

In an earlier session, the Junior College Journalism Association adopted a resolution that asserted a similar concept of junior college journalism instruction. In this instance, however, it was added that junior college journalism courses should be "coordinated in subject matter with those offered in the first two years of 4-year colleges or universities in the geographic area."

In another instance, the second annual Junior College Journalism Seminar sponsored by the Newspaper Fund, Inc., at The University of Texas, in June, 1968, addressed itself collectively to the subject of journalism curricula for the junior colleges. Seminar members, journalism teachers from 23 junior colleges in 13 states, agreed that 9 semester hours in journalism are generally acceptable for transfer to senior institutions.

It was generally agreed that subject matter appropriate for these 9 semester hours usually is limited to (1) Introduction to Mass Communication, (2) Reporting and News-writing, and (3) Editing. Seminarians proceeded to outline three semesters of study in these subject areas, but they recognized that implementation of such a curriculum must be locally and regionally subject to area needs and transfer considerations.

Appropriateness of subject matter, as described in a college catalog, is not sufficient, of course, to guarantee the validity of journalism instruction in all junior colleges. Other factors that must be considered include the qualifications and work load of the journalism teacher, and the adequacy of budget and facilities for journalism instruction. Without minimizing the importance of these considerations, it would be impractical to treat them fully here, and no attempt is made to do so at this time.

From this author's research, it can be statistically observed that major trends in junior college journalism instruction are consistent with ideals and norms set by educational bodies. Many junior colleges are undoubtedly falling short of quality journalism instruction for one reason or another. It is obvious, however, that most junior colleges have at least described a commendable journalism curriculum. To the extent that they are living up to their descriptions, and supporting them with adequate personnel and budgets, it is apparent that potential for junior college instruction of the first two years of a journalism degree program is indeed bright.